

AGRICULTURAL ENTRIES ON COAL LANDS IN ALASKA.

DECEMBER 20, 1920.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. GRIGSBY, from the Committee on Territories, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany 2189.]

The Committee on the Territories, to whom was referred the bill (S. 2189) "To provide for agricultural entries on coal lands in Alaska," having considered the same, report it to the House, without amendment, with the recommendation that it do pass.

This bill originated in the Senate, where it was passed on January 5, 1920.

While Congress has recognized the necessity for legislation of this character (see act of June 22, 1910, 36 Stats., 586, which permitted agricultural entries on mineral land, reserving to the United States the coal in such lands, and the right to prospect for, mine, and remove the same), such legislation has never been extended to Alaska. Nor has the act of July 17, 1914 (38 Stats., 509), providing for agricultural entries on lands withdrawn, classified, or reported as containing phosphate, nitrate, potash, or asphaltic minerals, been made applicable to Alaska.

There are vast areas of the best agricultural land in the Territory that are underlain by lignite, especially in the Tanana Valley and along the shores of Cook Inlet, along the eastern border of which over 200,000 acres of public land have been surveyed; this was formerly in the Chugach National Forest, but has been eliminated and is now part of the public domain; it is especially adapted for agriculture, and many settlers are already thereon.

The bill provides for the making of homestead entries upon the surface of lands withdrawn, classified, or valuable for oil or gas as well as coal, and is similar to laws already enacted applicable to public lands in the United States outside of Alaska, reserving the coal, oil, and gas to the United States, with the right to prospect for, mine,

and remove the same; and has the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, in letter dated July 11, 1919, and another dated December 8, 1919, the latter attaching report and favorable recommendation of Mr. George A. Parks, chief of the field division of the General Land Office. Mr. Parks also, in a letter to the Delegate from Alaska, dated December 27, 1919, says:

I believe the enactment of Senate bill 2189, or a similar one, will remove one of the chief obstacles to the early settlement of a large part of the best land in Alaska. It is safe to say that a large proportion of the homesteaders in the region west of Seward and south of the Alaska Range are held up pending the passage of this bill.

Patents for over a million acres of similar land in the United States outside of Alaska were issued in 1920.

